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# The Social Life of Ideophones: Exploring Linguistic Landscaping in Basque Publics

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# The Social Life of Ideophones: Exploring Linguistic Landscaping in Basque Publics

by

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**Report**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**May 2018**

## Acknowledgements

Without the support and guidance of faculty, friends and family, this report would not have been possible. First, I would like to thank my readers, Professors Anthony Webster and Courtney Handman, for their guidance and comments on multiple drafts of my work. They not only provided insightful ideas, but also challenged me to think through my analysis in ways that have made this work as well as other projects much stronger. In addition, the comments and suggestions provided by Professors Elizabeth Keating, Iraide Ibarretxe-Atuñano, Danny Law, James Slotta and Barbra Meek helped me rethink my analysis in new and productive ways. Finally, this MA would not have been made possible without the valuable insights, guidance and support of Professor Itxaso Rodriguez-Ordoñez.

I would also like to thank my linguistic anthropology graduate student friends, among them Hannah Foster, Aniruddhan Vasudevan, Qui'chi Patlan, Krishantha Fedricks and Nelson Yang, not only for their endless and insightful comments on my work, but also for their mentorship, encouragement and support through the process; a special thanks to Ani and Hannah for their continuous insightful edits to many drafts!

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love, encouragement and support. Thank you to my dear friends and roommates, Lara and Carlisia, for our mutual encouragement, support and determination through this process; to my dear friends, Ally, Hannah and Itxaso for always lending me strength and support; to my mom and dad for their endless and unwavering support; and the other members of my family including my grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and my sister, Abbie, who motivated me to keep moving forward.

# Abstract

## The Social Life of Ideophones: Exploring Linguistic Landscaping in Basque Publics

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In this paper, I focus on the analyzing the processes of production, emplacement, and uptake of ideophonic signage in the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain (Blommaert 2013). I place this focus within an ethnographically situated linguistic landscape, by which I refer to a set of literacy forms that can provide insight into language ideological frameworks that surround such linguistic practices. Specifically, I analyze the potential uptakes of visual-written ideophonic signage in public spaces and their relation to language ideologies about Basque identities, revitalization and speakerhood that circulate in the BAC.

I argue that this use of Basque ideophony evokes a local kind of intimacy through processes of rhematization, creating an iconic relationship between sound and sense that comes to link Basque people and tourists to the language through 'qualia' mapped onto these linguistic forms (Gal 2005, 2013). This mode of iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000)

enacts an oppositional stance toward Standard Basque, as either taken up by Basque speakers who are insecure about their fluency or by tourists who are in need of a branded cultural experience. That is, these ideophones are able to publicly stage this intimate connection between sound, sense, and place by presupposing and opposing the authoritative place of Standard Basque, which marginalizes ideophones and other non-normative modes of speaking. Furthermore, the same ideophones that index and iconicize linguistic intimacy for some (and in some cases the same) Basque natives also simultaneously do the metacultural work of displaying Basqueness—and of selling "localness" to the tourist (Urban 2001, Coupland 2012).

These Basque ideophones work to interpellate a Basque public (Warner 2002, Webster 2017b) that responds to the intimacy of Basque orality and finds in it a marker of authenticity and belonging. As written forms of intimately oral language use devalued in Standard Basque then, these signs push back against the Basque standardization—and ideologies of anonymity implicated therein—in its own terms. Instead, they foreground ideologies of authenticity (Woolard 2016) to exploit their "localness" as uniquely Basque sounds that are untranslatable and that one must learn through various modes of socialization and acquisition within local Basque communities.

Analyzing the use of ideophony in signage brings to the fore the ways that verbal art can become a crucial site for making social critique via aesthetic (and poetic) resistance. Furthermore, this study reinforces the importance for scholars of language minority movements to verbally artistic language use and literacy practices in everyday,

non-normative contexts more broadly, which often reveal vastly heterogeneous assemblages of ideologies surrounding concepts of publics and language.

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"Galduaz doa hiztun euskaldunaren sortzeko
ahalmena,
galduaz hizkuntzarekin jolasteko
eta gozatzeko gaitasuna,
eta hor galtzen demean,
hizkuntza bera dago galbidean."

[The creative capacity of the Basque speaker,
the capacity to play with
and enjoy the language, is being lost.
And when that is lost, the language itself
is on the way to being lost.]
(Zuazo 2000: 132)

## 1 Introduction

Scholars have long noted that Basque is rich in onomatopoeic structures, and these forms, henceforth called ideophones marking their potential to evoke a *sense* of sensory experience, function as "an organic and crucial component of the Basque linguistic system" (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 20, 2012, 2006; Schuchardt 1925). However, little work has focused on the study of Basque ideophones, their expressive potentials nor their grammatical functions in Basque linguistics and even less has been done with regard to the ways in which using Basque ideophones is evocative of language ideologies in social interaction.

In this paper, I focus particularly on Basque ideophones as they appear on visual-written public signage. I argue that this use of Basque ideophony evokes a local kind of intimacy through processes of rhematization, creating an iconic relationship between sound and sense that comes to link Basque people and tourists to the language through

‘qualia’ mapped onto these linguistic forms (Gal 2005, 2013).[1] This mode of iconization enacts an oppositional stance toward Standard Basque, as either taken up by Basque speakers who are insecure about their fluency or by tourists who are in need of a branded cultural experience. That is, these ideophones are able to publicly stage this intimate connection between sound, sense, and place by presupposing and opposing the authoritative place of Standard Basque, which marginalizes ideophones and other non-normative modes of speaking. The influx of these ideophones may then be a result of the success of the BAC education system to promulgate Standard Basque.

These ideophonic forms, through their shared sensorial understanding, act as indexical icons linking people and place to language that work to simultaneously (1) establish intimacy among Basque speakers through shared understandings of sound and sense that iconically link to Basque culture, people, language and place while also (2) aesthetically resisting (Barrett 2014) both the control of the Spanish state and the BAC regional government over public discourses—and standard language ideologies more broadly. On the other hand though, these ideophones in public signage also seem to (3) signify cultural “authenticity” to the tourist or foreigner. Interestingly, this notion of cultural authenticity, a process of commodification enabled by Basque ideophonic signage, can occur because the ideophones do the metacultural work of displaying Basqueness. The same ideophones that index and iconicize linguistic intimacy for some (and in some cases the same) Basque natives also simultaneous perform the distancing and commoditizing work needed to instantiate cultural authenticity.

[1] Here I thank my colleague, Aniruddhan Vasudevan for his insights.

Alongside ethnographic interviews and discourse analysis, here linguistic landscaping studies (LL) (Blommaert 2013) offers useful frames to analyze the ways Basque ideophones semiotically brand "Basqueness" and oppose Standard Basque in the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain (BAC). This is due to the fact that LLs always involve "signs, space, social actors, and ideology," and such space is never "neutral" but is always social, cultural, and political space (Spitzmüller 2015: 127, Blommaert 2013: 3, Blommaert and Maly 2014, Coupland 2012; Bakhtin 1981). By this method, I will explore the use of Basque ideophones in a wide variety of public spaces and how these forms work to index particular language ideologies of Basque authenticity and locality that circulate within the BAC. These language ideologies are to do with different imaginations of the Basque language and particular kinds of speakers that might use these linguistic forms.

Below I provide an example of such ideophonic branding, a recent phenomenon as noted by Ibarretxe-Atuñano (2017: personal communication) that has become quite widespread in the BAC in the last 15 years in the BAC.

Figure 1: Example of Ideophonic Branding (source: http://www.diariovasco.com)

This signage brands the *Bor-bor* Brewery, located in the center of Deba (Gipuzkoa) about a five minute walk from the beach. Originally known as a port town on the coast, Deba is a very old and relatively small town (of approx. 5,000 residents) located on the coastline, known for its coastline, its connection to Basque prehistory that can be visited at various archaeological cave sites, its central cathedral's gothic architecture, and its annual San Roke festival in honor of the town's patron.[2]

This example demonstrates the kind of permanent signs (Blommaert 2013: 53) that I will largely be discussing in the following sections, professionally designed and created for marketing and branding businesses in the BAC. Here we see a clean font, similar to [Helvetica], used by the Basque regional government and affiliated institutions on all their public, permanent signage that indexes the 'modernizing process' of the BAC. As the region transformed in the late 1980s through the early 2000s, the BAC

[2] Information retrieved from https://tourism.euskadi.eus/en/towns/deba/aa30-12375/en/

government wanted to project itself as a more 'modern' region, which one can see reflected through font changes on signage that cost millions to the BAC regional government (cf. Jarlehed 2015, Mateo 2005). This sign also incorporates multiple languages: (1) Basque 'Borbor' 'Artisau Garagardotegia', (2) English 'brewery', and (3) Spanish 'cervecería artesana.' This multilingualism on such signage may be indexical of a potentially commodified authenticity (Heller 2014, Heller, Pujolar and Duchêne 2014) through using Basque to brand the company, while also clearly demonstrating through use of Spanish and English that they market to tourists and the Spanish monolingual population in the BAC. However, while the type of business 'Artisau Garagardotegia' is translated on the sign, the ideophonic form remains untranslated. In most signage Ibarretxe-Atuñano (2007) and I have analyzed in our separate projects, there are very few instances in which multiple languages appear together in parallel display, and there is never any translation of ideophones where one finds parallel multilingualism on signs. One of my interlocutors noted that, "even to explain to them [people who don't speak Basque] what it [ideophones] means is difficult, because it's not really a word, I can't translate it." These business owners are essentially selling "localness" through untranslatable Basque sounds.

Elaborating the motivations for the branding choices of the business owner, Txurruka, *Diario Vasco* reporter, Salegi interviewed Txurruka in 2016, which I partially recount below to demonstrate the salience of iconic affordances that motivate Txurruka's choice to brand his business using an ideophone.

(1) Transcript[3]

(a) Salegi: Where does the logo and the name of Borbor come from?

(b) Txurruka: The name is the **onomatopoeia in Basque of the sound that water makes when boiling**. That **sound** is what produces the must [fermented liquid, Sp. mosto] of the beer in the cooking process and also the **sound** that occurs in the fermentation. The logo represents the name of the brand and **in the o's the boiling water is represented**.

Here we see the relationship between "sound and sense" (Webster 2017: 5) further articulated that draws on language-specific "sonic equivalencies" between the sound of the onomatopoeia for water boiling in Basque, as it is the "sound of the water boiling" that motivates Txurruka to use this iconic form. This linkage is iconically represented in the signage above in the o's, represented as bubbles iconic of the process of boiling that occurs in the brewing process. Below Salegi goes on to ask what makes *Borbor* beer 'unique', or "authentic" as a product, which would also indexically reflect what makes the *Borbor* Brewing Company a unique brand.

(2) Transcript[4] (ctd.)

(c) Salegi: What flavor does Borbor have? How would you describe it?

(d) Txurruka: Every Borbor is **unique** and has its flavor, aroma, texture and color. What distinguishes them is that it is a tasty, full-bodied beer.

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[3] Translated from Spanish Original: (Salegi) *¿De dónde viene el logo y el nombre de Borbor?* (Txurruka) *El nombre es la onomatopeya en euskera del sonido que hace el agua al hervir. Ese sonido es el que produce el mosto de la cerveza en el proceso de cocción y también el sonido que se da en la fermentación. El logo representa el nombre de la marca y en las oes está representada el agua en ebullición*. Salegi, A. Gaizka Txurruka (Cervecería artesanal Borbor): «Cada Borbor es única. Tiene su sabor, aroma, textura y color» (2016 March 6). *El Diario Vasco*. Retrieved from http://www.diariovasco.com.

[4] Translated from Spanish Original: (Salegi) *¿Qué sabor tiene Borbor? ¿Cómo la describiría?* (Txurruka) *Cada Borbor es única y tiene su sabor, aroma, textura y color. Lo que las distingue es que es una cerveza sabrosa, con cuerpo*. Salegi, A. Gaizka Txurruka (Cervecería artesanal Borbor): «Cada Borbor es única. Tiene su sabor, aroma, textura y color» (2016 March 6). *El Diario Vasco*. Retrieved from http://www.diariovasco.com.

In short, Txurruka describes the sensorial qualia (Gal 2013) iconically and indexically associated with this particular ideophone, the "flavor, aroma, texture and color," that distinguish it as a 'uniquely Basque' brand. Txurruka's brewery is also indexically branded as authentically local and Basque through choosing to brand the business using a Basque ideophone. This is because knowledge of Basque ideophonic structure and meaning relies largely on complex understanding of the Basque language—Txurruka indexes his speakerhood—and indexes a particular kind of locality through his familiarity with these onomatopoeic forms so characteristic of local (more authentic) ways of speaking Basque. However, the use of the ideophone alongside Spanish and English text on this signage also commodifies Basqueness to brand the business as a space in which tourists can have an "authentically Basque" experience. Thus, a tourist could iconize the ideophonic form *Bor-bor* on this signage as a metacultural display of 'Basqueness' (Coupland 2012, Irvine and Gal 2000).

Urla (1995) described the publics[5] created by Basque radical youth through public radio stations' use of linguistic strategies to circulate discourses that defy normalization and standardization of Basque in the years since Franco's death. This focus on the ways that "everyday" language practices, and here *literacy practices*, outside of formal academies and literacy programs (i.e. BAC educational institutions) reveals the vastly heterogeneous assemblages of ideologies surrounding concepts of publics and language that other studies of minority language movements have overlooked (Urla 1995). She has argued that Basque free radio broadcasts were an act of opposition that

[5] Urla refers to them as "partial" publics (1995).

challenged both the regional BAC government's and the Spanish state's control over public discourses through embracing "hybrid, playful, and anti-normative…language practices" (Urla 1995: 246). Here I focus this discussion on an analysis of the future publics this literacy practice of branding through ideophony may call into being.

In section 2, I will discuss the history of literacy studies, and the ways that ideologies of literacy as autonomous can be seen as a correlate to the project of anonymizing standard languages calling particular 'literate' publics into being. In section 3, I will outline a brief study of ideophonic studies that suggests ideophones have long been studied as 'primarily oral' forms—a claim this paper rejects and works to deconstruct through analysis of semiotically materialized ideophones in linguistic landscapes of the BAC. In section 4, I will discuss the ways linguistic landscaping lends itself to analyzing this aesthetic resistance to Standard Basque. I provide an analysis of the structural features of Basque ideophones in section 6, situating the discussion to show how these forms play out in the landscape. In section 7, I turn to the historic creation of Standard Basque and its dissemination in schools following Franco's dictatorship. In section 8, I then provide analysis of ideophones on signage in BAC linguistic landscapes as indexing intimacy, resistance, and touristic authenticity. In section 9, I provide overall conclusions of this study, suggesting that these Basque ideophones work to interpellate a Basque public that responds to the intimacy of Basque orality and finds in it a marker of authenticity and belonging.

## 2 Anonymizing the Literate Public

Collins and Blot (2003), Street (1984) and various other scholars of literacy have written extensive accounts of the historical development of literacy ideologies within Western societies implicated in such views that argue ideophones are primarily 'oral.' Coined by Street (1984), two distinct models of literacy have shaped our thinking in many ways about the various imaginative potentials and functions of literacy: 1) the autonomous model and 2) the sociocultural, ideological, or 'situated' model. Olson (1986; Olson and Torrance 1991), Goody (1977) and Ong (1982) were key proponents of autonomous models that argued literacy was a necessary societal development leading to the capacity for intellectual abstraction. As Goody stated, literacy is the "technology of the intellect," leading to changes in basic thinking processes that eventually lead to social transformation (i.e. to democratic societal organization) (Collins and Blot 2003: 17; Street 1984). These literacy ideologies have led to the need to cleanse "savage minds" through schooling, teaching literacy—reading and writing--and rewriting indigenous histories of indigenous and other minority populations in order to 'civilize' them (Mignolo 1992, Chuchiak IV 2010, Collins and Blot 2003). Such schooled literacy uses language as a tool of domination to shape disciplined bodies that conform to the normative values and ideologies of Western societies (Foucault 1979; Collins and Blot 2003: 122).

This looks all too similar to anthropological theories of evolutionary cultural development in that the division between oral and literate cultures, where orality is associated with limited capacities for rationality and logic and is therefore considered less

culturally and socially ‘developed,’ which looks very similar to historical characterizations of primitive vs. civilized societies. In their work, literacy is seen as context-free, autonomous discourse in “written” form that, especially in the case of scientific writings, unambiguously represents meanings—I would add *referential* meanings, irrespective of societal contexts. Promoting literacy, reading and writing according to particular standardized, orthographic conventions, as a feature of ‘civilized’ societies, ideologically erases (Irvine and Gal 2000) the diversity of literacy practices held by different societies around the world. Not only do oral literacy practices become devalued due to the motivated nature of such literacy ideologies, but also the very idea of “what counts” as literacy in the autonomous modeled ideologies is constrained to particular forms of reading and writing. As Handman discusses in her reading of Derrida, the very definitions of language in the West are also “dependent on a written perspective” (2013: 267). It is only through the invention of writing, and the ideological stance that through writing we are somehow able to abstract further from the immediate speaking event through fixing the word as written artifact on a page, that speaking can be seen as somehow more immediate. Put another way, to be able to decide that speaking is more immediate, we must have a category “written” that can then be conversely seen as more “distant.”

While writing is often discussed as either contributing to modernist rationality and forms of linguistic oppression, Webster (2006) and Bender (2010) among others demonstrate the ways literacy produces an array of social categories and positionalities. Webster (2006) draws our attention to the ideologically constructed notions of orality and

literacy that we must recognize not as independent, bounded linguistic practices but rather as complexly intertwined. Recognizing the ideologically motivated nature of literacies affords scholars the opportunity to analyze metapragmatic discourses (Silverstein 1993) surrounding literacy in order to understand other aspects of a particular society's structures and ideologies.

Bender argues, the "study of graphics and texts [of literacy forms] provides an excellent entry into understanding how language connects to systems of production, distribution, and consumption of resources and to power structures" (2010: 177) due to the material nature of graphic systems as well as the heavy language ideological attachments people have toward these systems. By paying attention to the various indexical affordances and implications of different literacy forms, one can learn much about how "macrosociological categories are accessed, embodied and promoted through microcontextual semiotic acts" (Bender 2010: 178).

In this paper, I focus on the production, emplacement, and uptake of ideophonic signage in the BAC. I place this focus within a situated linguistic landscape, by which I refer to a set of literacy forms that can provide insight into language ideological frameworks that surround such linguistic practices. Specifically, I analyze the potential uptakes of visual ideophonic signage in public spaces and their relation to language ideologies about Basque identities, revitalization and speakerhood that circulate in the BAC.

In the case of Basque normalization, the creation of a written standard and its dissemination in the BAC educational system become a way of conceptualizing the

Basque language as anonymous and autonomous—and a key component to the process of hailing a Basque public into being. Here I argue that another, different kind of Basque nationalist public is being created through the circulation of ideophony in signage that reinforces a sense of authenticity of non-standard language varieties for some Basque people (and tourists looking for authentic Basque cultural experiences). Thus while these non-standard, regional varieties of Basque historically precede the invention of Standard Basque, the standard variety in an ideological sense precedes this valorization of regional varieties as authentic because they are authentic in contrast to Standard Basque. Ideophones then become a primary aspect of socialization into authentic Basque speakerhood, as they point back to the "authentic" varieties seen as mother tongues whereas Standard Basque is the mother tongue of no one (Arozamena 2010, I. Rodriguez 2016, Hualde and Zuazo 2007).

Following Michael Warner (2002) and Webster (2017b: 2), discourse must circulate for a public to exist, and it is through this "circulation of discourse and its active uptake" that the public is realized. This public discourse is often imagined as "rational-critical dialogue" (Warner 2002: 82) that is "unhindered by conventions of affect and expressivity" (Warner and Hirschkind, as cited in Webster 2017b: 150); it relies on a particular ideology of language. This ideology of language, just like the autonomous model of literacy, favors a monotelic referential view of language, where words convey unambiguous, rational, semantic meanings about 'things' in the world (cf. Webster 2017b, Bauman and Briggs 2000, Leavitt 2011, Kroskrity 2004, Samuels 2004). This "rational-critical" public discourse is also imagined as articulated within a discrete

(standard) linguistic system by a relatively homogeneous social group (Gal 2006). Further, there are particular mediums imagined to circulate and maintain this public through rational discourse—particular kinds of written, codified literacy.[6]

In the case of much of Europe, standardization is a major vehicle by which the nation-state is ratified and legitimated; these standard languages being maintained by language academies that establish 'correctness' of form and codified such forms within dictionaries, grammars and other pedagogical materials. Through this process the academies establish a "way of speaking" as a 'correct' and 'standard' version of a language that ideologically erases linguistic diversity within publics (Gal 2006, Irvine and Gal 2000). Through the vision of a standard language ideology, the diversity of discursive (and literacy) practices through which publics come into being is also reduced to those that fit within particular forms of written, standard language that match those of other standard languages (Gal 2006, Urla 1995). An ideological framework of anonymity is implicated in these processes, as this written standard claims equidistance from all people of the nation. It claims autonomy from locality, as the goal is that speakers ideologically take up the standard as the voice of "nowhere" (Woolard 2016).

Warner suggests however that public discourse is *poetic*, "that all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world it attempts to circulate, projecting for that world a concrete and livable shape, and attempting to realize that world through address" (Warner 2002: 81). Poetic language draws attention to exactly

[6] Falling into a standard language ideology, Benedict Anderson (1991), for instance, argues particular kinds of standardized, written genres of discursive practice (e.g. newspapers and novels) must circulate to create and maintain this imagined community often called the nation-state.

those affective and expressive functions of language that such referential, often standard, language ideologies tend to obscure. Such poetic genres of language use can constitute the distinctive character of linguistic practices for social groups (Gal 2006), their 'authenticity.' Thus it is not surprising that poetry is central to projects of cultural and language revitalization, as it works to call an imagined future public into being that would reshape that world through discursive circulation of forms that distinguish an emergent public (Webster 2017b: 151).

In the case of ideophones then, including Basque ideophones, semantico-referential meanings can only provide one aspect of the experiential, depictive (iconic) and indexical ways these form-dependent expressions should be taken up. These linguistic forms exploit the poetic function of language to draw attention to their form (Jakobson 1960) and to their expressive meanings that evoke the imagination of listeners, or in this case readers. They act as an aesthetic for the content of the text they represent, instilling a particular felt connection between the reader of such signs and the textual material (Noss 2001, Nuckolls 2006, Webster 2009, Dingemanse 2011, Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017). Through social responses, or the uptakes, of these poetic messages, this emergent Basque public may come to circulate through these literacy practices (Gal 2006, Warner 2002, Webster 2017b).

In sum, the creation of Standard Basque and the primacy accorded to written language in that process were meant to summon forth a particular kind of Basque national public and national status. It also shored up a sense of linguistic autonomy to Basque, an autonomy that was meant to signal its regional autonomy and legitimate claims to

nationhood. Such standardization, and the language ideologies it operates through devalue (1) the diversity of spoken forms and (2) other possible approaches to literacy. Basque ideophonic signs then, by being written forms of intimately oral language use devalued in Standard Basque, push back against the standardization in its own terms. And in doing so, they work to interpellate a somewhat different public—one that responds to the intimacy of Basque orality and finds in it a marker of authenticity and belonging. Central to this foregrounding of Basque orality through the use of ideophones is the fact it is being done through representing ideophones in textual and pictographic forms. I will take up the discussion of ideophony as literacy practice in the following section.

# 3 Ideophony as Literacy Practice

Though marginalized in their study historically within various structural linguistic traditions, there is a small but important strain of ideophone study that has been ongoing since the 1850s (Dingemanse 2017: 1) in various languages throughout the world (e.g. Akita 2009, Barrett 2014, Dingemanse 2011, 2014; Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2006, 2012, 2017; 2003, 2006, 2010; Sicoli 2014, Webster 2008, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2017a—among others). Nuckolls and others have long noted, however, their "marginal importance to the science of linguistics" (2010: 46) despite their integral role within various languages' grammatical systems throughout the world.

These linguistic units have historically had many names within linguistic and linguistic anthropological literature, among which are *mimetics*, *expressives*, and *echo words* in various language-specific descriptions. Doke is typically cited for his seminal definition of the term "ideophone," describing these these linguistic forms as:

> the vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity (1935: 118).

While Doke's definition is certainly not all-encompassing of the potential capabilities of ideophones' expressive potential or grammatical function within languages, his notion of the ideophone—as he encountered these forms in his work with Bantu languages—certainly highlights the ideophone as a relatively motivated type of linguistic sign in its capacity to evoke depictive, affective, sensory, and imagistic

experiences that rely heavily on the foregrounding of iconic (and indexical) associations in use (Friedrich 1979; Webster 2014, 2017a; Dingemanse 2012, 2017).[7]

Ideophones, as Dingemanse notes, have been described by scholars as "evoking scenes that can only be represented with phrases" (Dingemanse 2013: 155). For instance, Diffloth describes each ideophone as a "microscopic sentence" (Diffloth 1972: 447) that "represents a full clause" (Noss 2001: 267). These forms, through linking of their expressive potential and their grammatical functions, are also considered prime examples of form-dependent expressions (Woodbury 1998), as ideophones are integrated within languages' grammatical systems in interesting and unique ways—evoking an interwovenness of "sound and sense" between form and meaning (Barrett 2014: 407, Webster 2014b: 432). In this paper, I work to take up Dingemanse and others' calls to get away from a preoccupation with ideophonic form in favor of trying to understand their interactional uses and metapragmatic functions within Basque communities in the BAC (Dingemanse 2012: 654, Childs 2001).

While there is a rich literature on ideophonic usage in conversational and other discursive genres, it seems important to call attention to written contexts where ideophonic usage remains metapragmatically salient in various communities. This relative lack of focus on ideophones as texts may be the result of prior work that argued

[7] The linguistic sign may be arbitrary in so much as languages may have different words to refer to the same things (and there are no mandated rules upon the ways sounds coalesce/conventionalize to form words, meaningful units, in different languages). That said, Saussure wishes to remove *L*anguage from its natural context: shared social use. Languages only exist in so much as they are spoken by members of social groups, through which direct and indirect connections between sound and meanings emerge (Bakhtin 1981). Saussure himself also notes a particularly salient exception to the arbitrary choice of signifier, onomatopoeia—the ideophonic form I will focus on here (Saussure 1966: 69).

ideophones are primarily 'oral' linguistic forms that "demand the presence [of physically present speakers]… communicating parties," (Kunene 2001) in use. Ideophones have been relatively understudied in their visual, emplaced manifestations, a few notable exceptions being Webster in his work on ideophony in Navajo poetry (2017a, 2017b, 2015, 2014a, 2014b, 2009), Lahti on Russian poetry (2014) and Barrett on the ideophonic poems of Humberto Ak'abal (2014). Despite the important contributions of these exceptions that foreground the poetic function of linguistic features in use, calling attention to the very form of an utterance as iconic and indexical of its meanings (Jakobson 1960; Peirce 1998), these are examples of primarily high registers of poetry in which authors are usually highly metalinguistically conscious and aware of their choices to use particular linguistic forms. Thus, more work is needed to deepen our understanding of different genres of ideophony.[8]

I argue such perspectives considering ideophones primarily 'oral' forms that require immediacy of speaking events reflects a referential language (and literacy) ideology (Webster 2006, Street 1984, Collins and Blot 2003) in line with autonomous approaches to literacy. These referentialist ideologies hold the primary function of language is to name (or refer to) things in the world; to communicate ideas *about* the world, rather than foregrounding the capacity of language to *act* within the world (Bauman and Briggs 2000, Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998, Kroskrity 2004:

[8] I use the term genre, following Briggs and Bauman (1992), to highlight the ways that genres are intertextual, that genres are linked to particular discourses through relations to prior discourses that are integral to their production and perception. Here ideophony in signage intertextually links ideophonic texts to prior discourses and utterances that echo their use, to ideologies associated with such forms, to political and social projects associated with such forms.

500). Further, such perspectives that highlight the necessity of 'oral' immediacy also reinforce the "great divide" between orality and literacy, between oral cultures and literate cultures. In the following, I show how these forms become semiotically materialized as literacy forms in ideophonic branding in BAC linguistic landscapes that complicate such ideological distinctions between orality and literacy.

## 4 Branding Linguistic Landscapes

Landry and Bourhis define *linguistic landscapes* as “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (1997: 23). While this definition provides a starting point from which Blommaert (2013), Coupland and Garrett (2010), Shohamy and Gorter (2008), Webster (2014a) and others have argued for ethnography as an integral component of understanding what makes such signs visible and salient to those that interact and take them up, Landry and Bourhis’s definition presupposes the very thing it wishes to describe. It presupposes territories instead of recognizing the work that these signs do to create such territories (Webster 2014a). The focus of signography, or an “ethnography of signs” (Pennycook, Morgan and Kubota 2013), is therefore to understand the ways signs come to create spaces, territories, regions and the ways these signs metapragmatically circulate ideologies, of publics and language for instance, by discursive means.

As Blommaert notes, Linguistic Landscaping Studies (LLS) “compels sociolinguists to pay more attention to literacy, the different forms and shapes of literacy displayed in public spaces” (2013: 2). In these landscapes, words are emplaced in signage that call into being archived meanings, linked to their indexical meanings such as memory, rules of grammar, etc. (Bakhtin 1981, Becker 1995, Shankar 2016: 128). Ethnographically informed LLS also compel us to pay attention not only to the shapes and forms of literacy displayed in public spheres but also to circulating discourses about literacy in the BAC that shape the way these forms are created, emplaced, and taken up by various individuals. Noted above, scholars typically focus on ideophony as a largely

‘oral’ linguistic form. However, I approach use of Basque ideophony here also as a literacy practice—a set of general norms regarding how written texts tend to be produced, interpreted, and/or discussed (Ahearn 2012: 143, Heath 1982) as these forms appear to be normalized in their use to brand businesses, initiatives and campaigns in the BAC using similar typographic and other visual strategies.

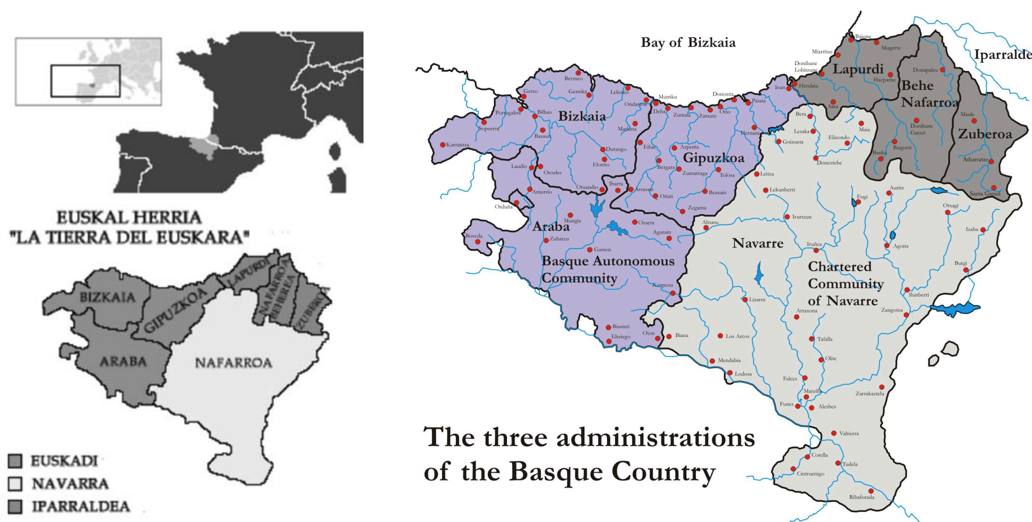
The Basque ideophones I analyze in the following are emplaced largely in public signage and slogans, though they are also found in various literary genres, tweets, and written poetry to name a few written media. These ideophones circulate and people circulate around them in a variety of public spaces as well. In urban areas, such as Bilbao (Bizkaia) and Donostia (Gipuzkoa), such forms appear concentrated in the historic “old town” areas. These areas are typically populated with lots of commercial shops as well as tourist attractions (i.e. museums, historic architectural sites such as cathedrals, etc.) and cultural souvenir shops. Such initial geospatial observations further support that these ideophones metaculturally display Basque culture to the tourist (Urban 2001, Coupland 2012). They work to create authentic cultural experiences for the tourist. Ideophones also appear in small towns located all throughout the BAC, in many cases branding businesses that don’t seem oriented to a tourist’s uptake (i.e. electric companies, supermarkets, schools—typically kindergartens and “head start” programs, etc.). These ideophones index a particular kind of local intimacy through creating an iconic relationship between sound and sense that links some Basque people to the language via qualia mapped onto these forms. Schools also become an interesting line of support for the ways these forms

aesthetically oppose the standard language ideologies imposed by Standard Basque through foregrounding language play in their brand.

As I have touched upon above and will elaborate in further sections, these signs appear situated within particular language ideologies of locality and rootedness, but also of commodified authenticity and anonymity (Woolard 2016, Heller 2014) held within BAC communities that compete and counteract one another as they circulate in these semiotically materialized forms and metalinguistic commentaries on their use.

# 5 Locating the Basque Country

Basque (or *Euskara*) has long been considered a linguistic isolate in Europe, as it is unrrelated to any other European language and is one of the oldest languages existing in Europe, predating the arrival of Indo-European languages (Hualde and de Urbina 2003, Azurmendi, Larrañaga, and Apalategi 2008).[9] The very meaning of *Euskal Herria*, the name typically used to refer to the greater Basque Country, is “Country of *Euskara*.” The expanse of the Basque Country stretches across three united Spanish provinces in the South under the label of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) of Spain (Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba), the autonomous Spanish province of Nafarroa (also Navarre), and the Northern French provinces (typically referred to as a whole as *Ipparalde,* “the Northern region”) of Lapurdi (Labourd), Nafarroa Beherea (Lower Navarre), and Zuberoa (Soule).




[9] Though Blevins (Forthcoming) proposes Proto-Basque and Proto-Indo-European, may both descend from the same, more ancient, mother tongue.

Figure 2: Map of the Basque Country (sources left to right: Meyer (2010: 17), http://www.basque.unr.edu/conferences/2011/languages.html)

I focus this study specifically within the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain (BAC), though further research needs to be done to determine if ideophonic signage is indeed used to brand in other areas of the greater Basque Country as well.

## 6 Basque Ideophones: Structural Function and Expressive Meanings

In the following, I elaborate on the linguistic structure of Basque ideophones before exploring their use in *written* signage found in public spaces, places, and more broadly domains of use in the BAC. As noted already, while scholars have long noted that the Basque language is rich in ideophones, usually refered to as onomatopoeias, little work has focused on the study of Basque ideophones, their expressive potentials nor their grammatical functions in Basque linguistics and even less work has been done gain insight into the ways using Basque ideophones can be evocative of particular language ideologies in social interaction**.** Here I take up Ibarretxe-Atuñano's call to further research the ways ideophones function as socially-charged forms that "play an important role in branding" Basqueness in the BAC (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 13, 19).

I will draw from Ibarretxe-Atuñano's extensive work outlining the distinctive features of Basque ideophones to provide a summary of their features, providing examples from public signage throughout the discussion.[10] As she notes, Basque ideophones are absolutely "organic and crucial part of the Basque linguistic system" (2017: 20). The major linguistic characteristics of these ideophones are: 1) unusual phonetics and phonology 2) reduplication, 3) multicategoriality, 4) specific semantic fields and 5) dramaturgic and stylistic functions (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017).[11]

[10] For a more extensive account of Basque ideophonic structure, see Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017, 2012, 2006.
[11] No descriptive nor sociolinguistic studies have yet been done on the prosody of Basque ideophones though intonational marking has been noted for ideophones in other languages (Dingemanse 2017, Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 19).

Beginning with phonetics and phononlogy, Basque ideophones employ unusual phonology "using specific phonemes, or using the same phonemes for ideophonic and non-ideophonic words, but in different phonotactic environments" and prosody that differentiates them from non-ideophonic words in the Basque language (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 4). For instance, certain phonemes seem to only specifically appear in ideophones, such as *dz-* /dz/.[12]

Figure 3: *dzanga* 'to dive into' (source: Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 15)

This sign was used as a motto for festivities (*Ibilaldia* 2003) organized to support the Basque language in Lekeitio (Bizkaia). *Ibilaldia*, meaning 'the march, journey, walk,' is an annual festival to raise funds in support of *ikastolak,* primary and/or secondary schools in Bizkaia, one of the provinces of the BAC. At *ikastola*, students are taught primarily, and in many cases entirely in the Basque language. Every year, an *ikastola* in the province organizes the event, choosing a motto and creating a theme song and video for the festival. This year's *Ibilaldia* 2018 (https://ibilaldia.eus/) also utilizes ideophones in their motto, *Taup!*, 'the sound of a heart beating, palpitations,' and their theme song

[12] Here I include the /phonemes/ and *graphemes* for the relevant segments in this paper.

for the event (see section 7). In the motto in Figure 3 above, there is an effort to foreground the iconicity of the ideophone through the image that depicts the event (of a whale?) 'diving' into water in the case of dzanga, 'to dive into.'

Phonemes and clusters, such as word-initial affricates (see Table 1) and word-initial palatals (see Table 2) also appear in environmental positions in Basque ideophones that differ from their environmental position within other areas of the lexicon (examples in Tables 1 and 2 adapted from Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 4).

| *tz-* /ts̺-/ *tzainku-tzainku* 'limp' |
|---|
| *tx-* /tʃ-/ *txirri mirri* 'to be half angry' |

Table 1: Word-initial Affricates

Table 2 lists examples of word-initial palatal phonemes that appear in this environment only in ideophones.

| *tt-* /c-/ *ttipi ttapa* 'walk with small steps' |
|---|
| *ñ-* /ɲ-/ *ñir ñir ñir* 'gleam, twinkling' |
| *x-* /ʃ-/ *xuxu-muxu* 'whisper' |

Table 2: Word-initial Palatals

Figure 5 is a tweet made by the Basque cultural center, *Astra*, in Gernika (Bizkaia) about their seven year anniversary occupying a particular space to promote Basque culture in the local community.

Figure 4: *ñir ñir ñir* 'gleam, twinkling' (source: Twitter @AstraGernika)

*Astra*[13], originally an arms factory owned by a Frankista that sold weaponry to the Franco's military and the Third Reich among other international entities, was a place where chemical weapons and pistols were mass-produced (Goñi-Mendizabal 2018). During the bombing in Gernika (April 26, 1937 at 4:30pm), the factory remained unharmed, and theories exist that this may have been on purpose (Rodriguez-Ordoñez, Personal Communication). The factory was reclaimed during a two week occupation of the buildings in December 2005 by Gernika youth that began a social movement entitled *Astra Gernikentzako*, 'Astra for Gernika' (http://www.astragernika.net/). These young people didn't want to see the buildings destroyed for housing, but rather thought the town should decide its use (Goñi-Mendizabal 2017). This led to the later establishment of the building as the first Basque "cultural creation factory," which is designed to be a "multi-functional space and a pioneer in new creations and trends, research and training"

[13] The company's board of directors later changed the name of the business to ASTRA-Unceta y Cía., S.A. in 1952, but it is widely referred to as Astra in Gernika-Lumo and the Basque Country more broadly. The company finally closed its doors in 1997 (Goñi-Mendizabal 2017: 31).

(https://tourism.euskadi.eus/en/museums/astra-creation-factory/aa30-12375/en/). This reclamation was seen as a symbolic Basque victory over the historic violence done to Gernika under Franco's rule. The use of the ideophone here showcases an expressive message of 'shining, gleaming or twinkling' that speaks to Basque cultural resilience.

Despite being common to the lexicon today, there are also phonemes that tend to appear in non-native words or borrowings, that do not appear in these word-initial environments elsewhere in the lexicon. To give some examples of such phonemes, see Table 3 below (Table 3 adapted from Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017).

| Word-initial Plosives | Word-initial Fricatives | Word-initial Nasals |
|---|---|---|
| *p-* /p-/ *pil pil* 'simmer, snowflake' | *z-* /s̺-/ *zirt zart* 'slashing, crackling, or shining' | *m-* /m-/ *txirri-mirri* 'to be half angry' |
| *b-* /b-/ *birrin-birrin* 'devastate' | *f-* /f-/ *far-far* 'continuous noise light as a murmur' | *n-* /n-/ *nistiki-nastaka* 'hodgepodge, jumble' |
| *t-* /t-/ *tauki-tauki* 'hammering; palpitation' | | |
| *d-* /d-/ *diz diz* 'shine' | | |
| *k-* /k-/ *kikili* 'cock' | | |
| *g-* /g-/ *glo-glo-glo* 'the sound of drinking, chugging' | | |

Table 3: Word-initial Plosives, Fricatives, and Nasals

Figure 5 is a photo of a bar in Amorebieta (Bizkaia), a smaller town located outside of Bilbao (about a 20 minute drive away from the city). Figure 6 is a photo from a comic book, *Pololoak*. *Poxpoliñen Iurriña*, authored by Patxi Gallego and published through a local publishing company, *Elkar*, in Donostia (Gipuzkoa) that strongly supports the publication and distribution of Basque-medium literacy.

Figures 5 and 6 (left to right): *far-far* ‘continuous noise, light as a murmur,’ *glo-glo-glo* ‘the sound of drinking, chugging’ (sources left to right: Photo by author, Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2007)

Basque ideophones also include particular types of consonant clusters, such as those found in Table 4. They are often palatalized, include vowel harmony, and can be a number of different syllable structures (typically no more than three, but as many as five) (Table 4 adapted from Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 5).

| *pl* /pl/ *plista-plasta* ‘splish-splash’ |
| --- |
| *gl* /gl/ *glo-glo-glo* ‘the sound of drinking, chugging’ |

Table 4: Consonant Clusters: Plosive + Liquid (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017)

The cover of a childrens’ book, *Plisti-Plasta*, is pictured in Figure 7. The visual affordances of the image the floaty and flippers the character is wearing alongside the title *Plisti-Plasta*, the ideophone that “depicts” (Dingemanse 2012) the event or action related to water ‘splish splash’ lead us to the conclusion that this story will involve swimming or another water-related activity. However, if one didn’t have knowledge of the semantic meanings afforded by the ideophone, this iconic and indexical relationship

would be less clear to the reader. This ideophone, *plisti-plasta*, is also typically accompanied by an iconic gesture of the hand moving up/down in synchronization with each morpheme. Ideophones in Basque, as found in other languages (Dingemanse 2017, 2014; Kunene 2001, Nuckolls 2010, 1999), are often accompanied by gestures adding further expressiveness to the description of an event as well as foregrounding their dramaturgic, performative function (Dingemanse 2017, 2014, 2012).

Figure 7: *plista-plasta* 'splish-splash'—typically accompanied by gesture of hand moving up and down (source: http://www.ibaizabal.com/)

Finally, the place of a phoneme's articulation denotes different degrees of an action or event. Back vowels are associated with degrees of events or activities (types). See Table 5 for an example (adapted from Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 6).

| *bor bor* 'strong boiling' → *gal gal* 'normal boiling' → *pil pil* 'superficial boiling, simmer, snowflake' |
|---|

Table 5: From Back Vowels to Front Vowels

Figures 8 and 9 Examples (left to right): *bor bor* 'strong boiling,' *pil pil* 'superficial boiling, simmer, snowflake' (sources left to right: Salegi (2016), pil-pil.com)

While I have already discussed Figure 8, in the photo of the signage above for *Bor-bor* Brewery in Deba (Gipuzkoa), the o's of *bor-bor* are iconic of the bubbles, and the sound those bubbles make as water boils, that occur in the brewing process. Figure 9 is the name of a studio created by Basques that reside in France. The signage here, while it's a bit abstract, may be iconic of snowflakes (see Table 5), one of the associated meanings for this ideophonic form; this is a question I will delve into in future ethnographic work, asking community members further questions surrounding motivations for using these linguistic forms to brand businesses. It's also worth noting that *pil-pil* may be a bivalent (Woolard 1998) ideophonic form here that has been borrowed into Spanish from Basque (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 19), so it's difficult to determine which linguistic code this form fits into with the current information gathered.

As can be seen in many of these examples, one process characteristic of ideophone morphology in Basque is partial or full reduplication, repetition of a

morpheme. In Basque, one can even triplicate an ideophone, as in the case of Figure 5, *ñir*, *ñir*, *ñir* 'gleaming, twinkling.' This reduplication can denote a number of things, dependent upon the way it is accomplished (partial, full, triplicated, vowel disharmony, etc.) such as heaviness, size, strength, and speed (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 7).

In Basque, the majority of ideophones function as adverbs and nouns, some as verbs, and others as less commonly as adjectives and interjections (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 8). They may undergo derivation and compounding processes, an obligatory process if used as verbal ideophones (e.g. *irrist* 'slip, tear' + *-tu* (verbal suffix) = *irristu* 'to slide') (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 8), but in some cases, ideophones remain "bare" (e.g. in the case of interjections). In yet other cases, ideophones may also be multicategorical (e.g. noun and adverb simultaneously) (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 9).

While integral to the Basque linguistic system, these onomatopoeic structures have long been left out of pedagogical and reference materials in L1 and L2 acquisition, and they have certainly been under-studied formally as in many other languages of the world due to their deviance from traditional Latinate grammatical categories (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017, 2006, Nuckolls 2010, 2006). Ibarretxe-Atuñano notes the need for further study of the ways these fundamental forms in the Basque linguistic system are taught in classrooms, as they are typically treated like "mere pieces of vocabulary" that are only taught to advanced students of the Basque language in levels B2 and C1 (2017: 20).[14]

[14] In my own intensive Basque courses in 2017, I was a beginner and can corroborate that ideophonic structure nor vocabulary was focused on in our learning process (A1 and A2 levels). We only acquired very common forms, or lexicalized or de-ideophonized forms as Ibarretxe-Atuñano calls them (following Msimang 1987 as cited in Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 19). These forms are used so often their salient

However, as noted in Figure 7 above, these forms do appear widely in childrens' genres and more recently, a booklet for helping parents teach their young children Basque was published, *Ku-ku! Haurrekin hitz egiten hasteko* (2006) 'Kuku! Start to speak with children,' by the Centre for Basque Services in Bizkaia that include an emphasis on ideophones.

Ideophones offer much more in their potential uptakes when one takes into account their expressive and imaginative potentials in addition to their referential meanings (Webster 2014b). In the examples above, I have tried to show how these ideophones as structurally interesting linguistic features that can be analyzed more thoroughly when one incorporates the sociocultural context of their social creation and semiotic emplacement. Geospatially, where do these ideophones appear in signage, and how might that be socially motivated? What are the indexical associations these forms may hold, and why might an ideophone be good at foregrounding such meaningful associations through its form? Where do these forms circulate in Basque public spaces, and who uses, or is perceived to use, these forms? To whom might these ideophones be addressed, and why might that matter, especially taking into account the divergent language ideological frames of Basque identity in the BAC? In the next section and in further research on Basque ideophony, I will work to explore answers to these questions.

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expressive nature becomes weaker and they are less often included in this categorical group of words. In short, the more conventionalized iconic, expressive forms become in this case, the less iconic they are perceived to be.

## 7 Ideological Frames: Authenticity and Anonymity

In this section, I show how the project to normalize the Basque language through standardization relies on language ideologies of authenticity and anonymity about linguistic authority that lead to the use of ideophony in public signage as another mode of enacting an oppositional stance toward Standard Basque. In other words, ideophony in public signage ultimately challenges the anonymous voice of a nation-like Basque public through public display of materialized "localness" found in uniquely Basque sounds. As this study shows, these ideophones are able to publicly stage this intimate connection between sound, sense, and place by presupposing and opposing the authoritative place of Standard Basque, which marginalizes ideophones and other non-normative modes of speaking.

Since the end of Franco's dictatorship upon his death in 1978, the Basque region has gained a greater level of autonomy as Spain democratized in the 1980s. Just a century earlier, however, the Basque language had been in an intense state of language shift under Franco's oppressive "Castilian only" policy.[15] These Castilian only policies and the erosion of Basque language and culture that resulted during that period, prompted a long legacy of Basque nationalist organizations that strongly advocated for revitalization and "modernization" of the Basque language in order that it might not be lost (Urla 2012, Meyer 2010). As a result of these strong nationalist movements and the autonomy Basques gained in Spain's democratization, Basque and Spanish (Castilian) now co-exist

[15] Castilian is the standard variety of Spanish spoken in Spain.

in the Basque Autonomous Community of Spain, as co-official languages used in overlapping sociocultural domains in a heavily multilingual sociolinguistic situation.

The goal of this linguistic and cultural revitalization has long been a normalization of the Basque language in the BAC; that is, to push for Basque to become an unmarked, anonymous language of use in all sociocultural domains (Azurmendi et al. 2008, Gorter, Zenotz, Etxague, and Cenoz 2014). A major aspect of this normalizing process was the creation of Standard Basque (*Euskara Batua*, lit. translation 'Unified Basque') as a widespread written form. While not finalized until the late 1960s, the process of creating Standard Basque began in the mid-19th century as writers, academics, and politicians—Sabino Arana, creator of the Basque Nationalist Party, among them—began the process of defining orthographic conventions of what would eventually become the unified variety (Arozamena 2010: 35). Members of the *Euskaltzaindia*, the Academy of the Basque Language established in 1918, continued to work toward standardization resulting in the creation of a unified grammar in 1968 that incorporated linguistic features from various dialects while leaving others out. This resulted in widespread criticisms by Basque people of the Standard as an artificial, in some cases stigmatized, variety, the "language of books," the "mother tongue of no one" (Arozamena 2010, Hualde and Zuazo 2007, Ortega, Amorrortu, Goirigolzarri, Urla, and Uranga 2014, 2015, I. Rodriguez 2016, Urla, Amorrortu, Ortega, Goirigolzarri and Uranga 2016).

Thus, the Basque standardization project attempted to codify dialectal authenticity into a single standard variety that would unify local varieties into a unified "voice of the Basque people," locating this voice as rooted in an autonomous, nation-like region of the

Basque Country. However, this project failed to bring about ideological acceptance of such a unified voice, resulting in salient ideologies of linguistic authenticity (Woolard 2016) that come to the fore in attempts to valorize local, authentic Basque sociolinguistic identities rooted in regional dialects. This valorization of authenticity, as discussed in this paper, becomes semiotically materialized in BAC public spaces through the use of ideophonic signage that aesthetically resist Standard Basque as well as Spanish and advocate local ways of speaking (i.e. with ideophones).

Standard Basque is now the primary language of education at all levels as well as the language used by the Basque government and most popular media forms, such as *EuskoTV* and radio programs among others (Hualde and Zuazo 2007). For instance, the current educational model in the BAC school networks consists of three different multilingual programs, which were established in the Euskara Use Normalization Act in 1982 (Ley de Normalización del Uso del Euskara, Parliamento Vasco 1982).[16] In Model A, Spanish constitutes the dominant language of instruction with Basque as a course subject. In Model B, each language receives equal time as a course subject and also as a language of instruction. In Model D, Basque is the dominant language of course instruction with Spanish as a course subject (Cenoz 2009, Gorter et al. 2014). The goal of each model is to promote proficient bilingualism with Basque, as bilingualism has become a central component of Basque identity (Meyer 2010) in the face of the inevitable

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[16] The popular reason for lack of a model C is that the Basque language does not recognize 'c' as a grapheme. However, Gardner (2002: 7) notes, "the real reason is that initially there was a model C which was rapidly abandoned, partly it seems for organisational reasons. The Basque alphabet does contain the letter C, though its use is restricted to foreign words." This is another form of linguistic differentiation between Basque and Spanish through orthographic representation, which is always socio-politically and ideologically motivated (Barrett 2014, Schieffelin and Doucet 1994).

fact that nearly all Basque speakers are multilingual in Spanish or French, and increasingly English.[17] In this model of Basque normalization however, learning Basque was still largely a choice, as Model A was targeted toward Spanish mother tongue speakers in a format that essentially resembles foreign language pedagogy.

While Basque normalization has been largely successful in a number of ways, many speakers still remain linguistically insecure in their use of Basque. This insecurity stems from many ideological origins, such as divergent notions of Basque identity, some of which hinge on ideological framing of authenticity that denote one must speak Basque (and speak in particular ways) to be considered authentically Basque. For instance the only way to say someone is a 'Basque person' in *Euskara* is with the word *Euskaldun*, literally 'one who has (possesses) the Basque language' (Urla et al. 2016, Meyer 2010, Hualde and de Urbina 2003). Further, Basque relies to a great extent on its younger generation of *euskaldunberris*, "new" speakers, for its linguistic maintenance and survival due to generational gaps in knowledge of the language,[18] these linguistic

[17] In fact, one of the ways Basque language schools have remained so successful is their early exposure programs to English for children (Azurmendi et al. 2008).

[18] During Franco's rule over Spain, as stated previously, Basque was made illegal as a language of education, of media and other public domains of use in a diglossic situation. The generations that lived under his rule thus typically didn't have access to Basque literacy" (prior to 1975). People began learning Basque in 1968 and 1969 as Franco began to lose his grip on power over the region. It was around this time that the language was standardized and *ikastolak* emerged more widely in the BAC. In 1979, Basque became a co-official language with Spanish in the BAC, and in 1982, the law of Basque normalization was passed, which began incorporating the language into the BAC educational system as a language of instruction and a language of study. Further, the Basque government funded *barnetegiak*, immersion programs, and *euskaltegiak,* Basque language schools, where many went to learn the Standard variety. Thus by 1982, Basque was becoming a more widespread language of use in the BAC once more though many of these speakers largely learned Basque through an instructional setting.

insecurities are of great concern to those invested in Basque normalization.[19] This concern is reflected in the 2007 choice of the nationalist party to pass Decree 175/2007 (Meyer 2010) to revise the Euskara Use Normalization Act of 1982 to declare Basque the primary language of instruction in education environments.

While Models A, B, and D continue to be available options, this decree in effect has led to greater enrollments in Models B and D, in juxtaposition to declining enrollments in Model A. Following the passage of Decree 175/2007, the Basque Nationalist Party lost political power in the BAC in 2009 for the first time since the BAC's establishment in the early 1980s. This happened in part because the right-leaning, conservative Spanish Socialist Workers Party (Sp. Partido Socialista Obrero Espanola) interpreted this Decree as an act that took away the choice to live as a monolingual Spanish speaker in the BAC (Meyer 2010). However, since the inception of Decree 175/2007, the trend of increasing enrollments in Models B and D has continued, and the three models (A, B, and D) are still the standard available options for students in the BAC educational system. In sum, both of these policy positions hinged on different interpretations of the Basque government's goal of language planning: convivencia, or 'coexistence' of minority languages and peoples that can be achieved through normalization (Gobierno Vasco 2007).

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[19] Here I use the term "new" speaker (following Ortega et al. 2014, 2015, and Urla et al. 2016), in denoting a type of Basque speaker who learns *Euskara*, not as a mother tongue, but through education, immersion programs, etc. The term widely used to refer to these "new" speakers circulating in BAC communities is *euskaldunberri*, or *euskaldun* "Basque speaker"+ *berri* "new", and many times this term denotes a category of speaker who has 1) not yet achieved full proficiency, 2) learned as an adult, or outside the home more generally, 3) a Basque speaker who is not ethnically Basque, and/or 4) may speak *Euskara Batua* rather than local dialects denoting a lack of legitimacy and authenticity in their Basque linguistic identity.

Collins and Blot note, “writing allows the coordination of complex social action, but it does not, by itself create such action” (2003: 162). In the BAC, the institutionalization of Standard Basque has long been a cornerstone of Basque normalization movements of the late 19th and 20th century, involving a corresponding establishment of centralized educational models that teach Standard Basque—teaching Standard Basque literacy and grammar alongside the spoken dialect, despite the fact that conflicting language ideologies surrounding Standard Basque’s authenticity and legitimacy exist rather strongly in the BAC (Ortega et al. 2014, 2015, Urla et al. 2016, I. Rodriguez 2016). Members of *Euskaltzaindia* and Basque Nationalist movements (PNV and ETA) saw the role of literacy as necessary to normalizing and reversing Basque language shift in the wake of Franco’s dictatorship.

Thus, widespread literacy and the incorporation of Standard Basque more generally alongside political autonomy in the BAC have been imagined by elites (i.e. *Euskaltzaindia* members, such as linguists and politicians) as central to the goals of reversing language shift in the BAC. Statistically speaking, the percentage of people that defined themselves as Basque speakers rose from 22% in 1981 to 36.4% in 2011, 19% of those are passive bilinguals that understand Basque but cannot speak it, and 44% of people don’t speak or understand the language (Ortega et al. 2014: 48). However, the creation of this new literate variety led to ideological conflict, as the Standard’s anonymity works to background and ideologically erase dialectal diversity, especially in Bizkaia where dialects do not structurally resemble Standard Basque.

Anonymous languages have ideological foundations in political authority of the public sphere in the classic Habermasian sense (Woolard 2016: 25). One who speaks a language of anonymity speaks with a "voice from nowhere" as they participate in public discourse and as their social origins are erased. Thus, in contrast to the indexical work of authentication that foregrounds *who* is speaking rather than *what* is said, languages of anonymity foreground referentiality as their source of legitimation (Woolard 2016: 26). That is, anonymous languages seem to their speakers to be the "best fit" to refer to and communicate about 'things' in the world. These assemblages of ideologies of anonymity surrounding the implementation of the Standard variety lead to a salient and ideologically motivated recognition of dialectal diversity. This recognition is founded upon localizable voices, and the need for authentic Basque language, that challenges the frame of Basque as a 'modern' language of all Basques in all places, an anonymous language (Woolard 2016).

This standardization project however remains highly contested by many in the Basque Country, as can be seen in recent studies by Ortega et al. (2014, 2015) and Urla et. al (2016), in which the authors explore the ways Basque speakers perceive of their linguistic and social identities, showing that speakers align notions of greater authenticity to dialect speakers of Basque. Through achieving greater authenticity one can acquire greater legitimacy as a Basque speaker (Ortega et al. 2014, 2015, Urla et al. 2016). This is a type of authentication one cannot readily gain through simply having the capacity to speak Basque as learned in the BAC educational system because these programs teach speakers Standard Basque. Rather, this notion of legitimacy and authenticity stems from

notions of Basque identity rooted in local, social identities (rooted in place, history, and particular ways of speaking for instance).

Within the ideological frame of authenticity, Woolard notes that one's speech must very clearly and consciously mark one "from somewhere," indexing a locality. What signals a truly authentic voice is a relationship of unambiguous iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) between the linguistic forms used in speaking and the speaking self (Woolard 2016: 22-23). Imagining language within this ideological frame can restrict its contexts of use and its potential audience. For instance, an outsider who learns Basque as a second language in a classroom will never be fully authenticated and legitimated as coming from a particular locality, as discussed in examples below from regional media as well as my ethnographic observations. Furthermore, ideophones are one example of these authentic, local ways of speaking typically not taught in schools, discussed further in section 8.

As Ortega et al. (2014, 2015) and Urla et al. (2016) discuss, standardization has had a great influence on the ways young people classify themselves as Basque speakers. Many classify themselves as *euskaldunberri*, 'new Basque speakers,' as they learned Basque "not as a mother tongue" (Ortega et al. 2014: 48, 2015; Urla et al. 2016, Lantto 2016, 2018, I. Rodriguez 2016). In many cases young Basque people, that originate from and reside in BAC communities, will consider themselves *euskaldunberri* ('new Basque speaker') or *euskaldun* ('Basque speaker') rather than *euskaldun zahar* ('native, or old speaker') even if they learn Basque in community-driven headstart programs and pre-K

programs at *ikastolak* (private schools) around age 3—and even if learning the local dialect rather than the Standard.

One of my interlocutors, for instance, learned Basque more than 40 years ago now "on the farm" rather than in a classroom, speaks both Gernika Basque and Standard Basque fluently, and teaches both Standard Basque and Spanish in one of Gernika's *euskaltegiak* (language schools). Learning Basque "on the farm" used to be a traditional way of learning the language through immersion because Basque was believed to reside largely in rural areas and small towns. Stereotypes about Basque as a rural language are still articulated through the ideological framework of authenticity in which one must speak in such a way that indexically marks their locality through dialectal features.[20] My interlocutor can index a voice very much "from somewhere," having lived in Gernika for nearly 40 years, aligning himself as a legitimate and authentic speaker (Urla et al. 2016). He also spent most of his childhood in Bilbao just 30 minutes away in the city. He still considers himself *euskaldunberri* though after all these years and frequently states that he

[20] For instance, the film widely-known in the Basque Country as *Kutxidazu bidea, Ixabel* (2006) comedically plays with cultural tropes about *euskaldun zaharrak*, 'native "old" Basque speakers' and *euskaldunberriak*, 'new speakers' as well as ideologies of authenticity that root the Basque language in particular localities—typically the rural, romanticized countryside. In the film, the main character and *euskaldunberri*, Juan Martin (Mikel Losada), goes to live on a Basque farmstead in the *Tolosaldea*, a region of the BAC in eastern Gipuzkoa, where he hopes to improve his knowledge of Basque—that he learned in *euskaltegi* (Basque language school). Throughout the film, he tries to reconcile "true" Basque with the Standard he learned in *euskaltegi*, equating the local variety spoken on the farm to "Swahili" to exaggerate the differences between Standard Basque and the Gipuzkoan dialect the family spoke on the farm. On another interesting note, I first encountered this film during my sessions in *barnetegi* (Basque immersion programs), where it was used as a kind of "fun" learning activity to engage with Basque outside our classroom hours during the days. These kinds of films do ideological work through exposure to stereotypes and ideologies about Basque sociolinguistic identities from the beginning of one's learning process—and thus may end up contributing to the reinforcement of differentiation between new speakers and native, "old" speakers of Basque in some ways.

considers himself ‘Spanish’ simply because he was not born in the Basque Country but rather a neighboring province.

Furthermore, Standard Basque is defined in its “purity” from regional linguistic features, code switching, and other forms of “mixed” linguistic productions that incorporate Spanish or other Basque varieties. As noted above, this variety was deliberately created from various regional varieties of Basque though, making it anything but “pure” in form. Not only is it not “pure” in this sense, but this variety is disproportionately modeled from one set of Gipuzkoan dialects that stand in heavy contrast to regional varieties spoken in Bizkaia where I primarily work (Arozamena 2010, Hualde and Zuazo 2007). There has long been tension between Gipuzkoan and Bizkaian Basque varieties, as they both had existing literary varieties that held regional prestige yet were very distinct in their grammatical, intonational, and phonemic systems; the attitudes of Bizkaian Basques toward Standard Basque are thus far more varied and in many cases negative. In Bizkaia and elsewhere in the BAC then, Standard Basque has failed to fully establish itself as a language of anonymity, a voice from nowhere, as it still indexically links speakers to particular varieties and histories.

Conversely, this linkage also endows Gipuzkoan varieties with significant symbolic power as they resemble Standard Basque. This endowed legitimacy has had far reaching consequences in the BAC since its creation in the late 1960s that contribute to different notions of linguistic identity. Bourdieu (1991) would argue this legitimacy only exists though because individuals subjected to symbolic power attribute and “recognize” legitimacy of the variety, and thus of its speakers. This in turn allows speakers of

Standard Basque to wield symbolic power through misrecognition of the variety as a prestige variety, which has led to a devaluation of regional varieties and strong attitudes against code switching and speaking in ways that people name as “Euskanol” (Lantto 2016).[21]

However, there also remains the authenticating form of legitimacy discussed above that is attributed to regional varieties. While not endorsed by the Basque Government as varieties of education, media, and politics, regional Basque varieties are attributed degrees of legitimacy as local and “authentic” ways of speaking Basque that provide yet another mode of symbolic power to speakers of such varieties. While the symbolic capital one can accumulate from speaking in local ways does not necessarily transfer to all domains, institutions, and locations in the BAC, it provides a more “authentic” Basque identity to individuals in their local communities. Beyond even these alternative modes of legitimacy which take precedence in different institutions, locations, etc., those individuals, and there are many, that are unable to speak Basque, even after years of attempted learning of the Basque language, face difficulties in positioning themselves as integrated members of Basque communities and certainly encounter difficulties in establishing these particular kinds of legitimate, authentic sociolinguistic identities.

Thus, it seems two ideological framings co-exist in the BAC, though in a contested way, which both serve to naturalize linguistic forms as authoritative expressions of social experiences in the world (Woolard 2016: 30). As discussed above,

[21] Euskara + Español = Euskanol

not only do we see different ideological frameworks of sociolinguistic identity emerge in contradictory assemblages of authenticating and anonymizing language ideologies from within and outside the Basque community, but we also see different forms of legitimacy attributed to Basque speakers' sociolinguistic identities within communities. While standardization has been a vital tool of Basque normalization, seen in the importance of language transmission and linguistic maintenance through education in Standard Basque, this project functions within the terms of state hegemonic hierarchies that work to gain recognition of Basque through demonstrating its equivalence to other "world" languages (Urla 1995: 246).

As this section demonstrates, dialects come to oppose the anonymous Standard as they become valorized for their authentic "localness." Ideophones then become an important site of this ideological opposition through the ways that their public displays simultaneously localize Basque and oppose the Standard. While further ethnographic investigation will bring clarity to these potential uptakes, such public language displays always contain a metadiscursive component. Gal (2006: 174) insightfully notes this metadiscursive commentary is often achieved, "in coded ways, [in] metamessages (clues) that indicate the imagined recipients, the imagined route of circulation of the message, while simultaneously hiding exactly this information."

## 8 Analyzing Linguistic Landscapes: Ideophones in Public Signage

Just as Urla (1995) described the publics created by Basque youth through public radio stations' use of linguistic strategies to defy standardization of Basque, here I focus on the ways that ideophony in signage, as a form of "everyday" language (and literacy) practice, reveals heterogeneous assemblages of ideologies surrounding concepts of publics and language in the BAC. I will argue that these literacy practices of branding through ideophony call into being a future public through use of anti-normative ways of speaking. Through processes of rhematization, Basque ideophony in public signage evokes a local kind of intimacy, linking sound and sense through an iconic relationship that comes to link Basque people to their language through 'qualia' mapped onto ideophonic forms (Gal 2005, 2013).

These linguistic forms, act as indexical icons linking people and place to language that work to simultaneously (1) establish intimacy among Basque speakers through their shared sensorial understanding that iconically link to Basque culture, people, language and place while also (2) aesthetically resisting (Barrett 2014) both the control of the Spanish state and the BAC regional government over public discourses—and standard language ideologies more broadly. These ideophones in public signage also seem to (3) signify cultural "authenticity" to the tourist or foreigner. This notion of cultural authenticity, a process of commodification enabled by Basque ideophonic signage, can occur because the ideophones do the metacultural work of displaying Basqueness. The same ideophones that index and iconicize linguistic intimacy for the Basque natives also

simultaneous perform the distancing and commoditizing work needed to instantiate cultural authenticity.

As I discussed in my introduction with the example of *Bor-bor* brewery, various potential uptakes are available for every encounter with ideophonic signage, dependent upon who is interacting with these literacy forms. A 'reader' who does not know Basque (i.e. the tourist) might recognize the sign as "looking" Basque through pragmatic iconicity, but have no idea what the semantic or indexical meanings of the ideophone they encounter. Here the tourist that recognizes the sign as iconically Basque may take up this sign as a form of metacultural display (Coupland 2012, Urban 2001)—that this is a place of business where one can interact and have an 'authentic' encounter with Basque culture. This commodification of authenticity is pervasive in many cultural tourism experiences (Coupland 2012, Heller 2014).

On the other hand, to grasp the shared depictive, sensory, and experiential qualities of an ideophone's semantic and indexical meaning, a person would need to have extensive knowledge of the Basque language alongside particular kinds of socialization into Basque language use. Thus, the uptake of an ideophone by a Basque individual may also serve to index an individual's authentic and legitimate Basque identity (Urla et al. 2016, Ortega et al. 2014, 2015), even differentiating them from Basque second language learners who may not encounter ideophones in their learning experience (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017). A third way one might interpret their potential uptake is through the ways these forms act as public displays of 'language play' that counteract standard language ideologies in the BAC. Ideophones in this way may be a way of aligning

oneself with particular kinds of authentic local dialects through displays of verbal art that act to aesthetically resist Standard Basque as a prestige variety. One could also frame this as an attempt to use such displays of language play to bring together all Basque linguistic diversity in the BAC that also counteract standard language ideologies and embrace shared verbally artistic genres and ways of speaking that highlight the Basqueness of these public spaces.

### 8.1 IDEOPHONES AS "AESTHETIC"

Ideophones are typically relegated to an index of "childishness" and "immaturity" due to their association with theories of the evolution of language that argue iconic relationships between sound and meaning are less complex than conventionalized, symbolic form-meaning relationships (Silverstein 1994, Dingemanse 2008).[22] Anthropologists, such as Lévy-Bruhl, popularized these theories, for instance, positing a 'primitive mentality,' where ideophones provided evidence of the " 'irresistible tendency' of the native to imitate that which one perceives" (Dingemanse 2008). The referential, monotelic ideologies of language I discussed above also work to establish this indexical association that ideophones somehow 'lack seriousness.' This is because such poetic language draws attention to its own ambiguity (Webster 2017b) in its form as well as its affective and expressive meanings, rather than acting as transparent names for things in the world. Ideophones, in their very structural form, rely on their iconic and indexically

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[22] Dingemanse (2008) points the reader to Lévy-Bruhl (1910) *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures* (translated as *How Natives Think*, 1926) for examples of such approaches to iconicity.

close relationships to their associated referents in order for their uptake to be successfully affective and expressive. As Ibarretxe-Atuñano notes, in historical periods of academic study, onomatopoeias in Basque were seen as “a trait of Basque primitivism” (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 3) highlighting how these kinds of ideologies about language circulate in the BAC.

As shown in the examples below, ideophones appear widely in childrens’ genres of literature, music and poetry; they are also used widely in everyday conversations with children (as well as among adults). Here is an example of the Basque ideophone, *txirri mirri* ‘to be half angry.’ *Txirri mirri* is the name of a childrens’ music group, *Txirri Mirri eta Txiribiton*, that dresses up as clowns, and is accompanied in their album by the *Euskadiko Orkestra Sinfonikoa*, ‘The National Basque Orchestra.’

Figure 10: Ideophones in Children’s Genres (*plisti-plasta* ‘splish-splash’—typically accompanied by gesture of hand moving up and down; *txirri mirri* ‘to be half angry’) (sources left to right: http://www.ibaizabal.com/, https://www.euskadikoorkestra.eus22145/)

Booklets for helping parents teach their young children Basque, such as *Ku-ku! Haurrekin hitz egiten hasteko* (2006) ‘Kuku! Start to speak with children,’ have been published by the Centre for Basque Services in Bizkaia that also place emphasis on

ideophones. Foregrounding ideophones in children's genres, both in the classroom and at home, highlights the ways parents socialize children into the Basque language—in playful and 'fun' ways using ideophones and other kinds of language games. The knowledge children acquire about Basque ideophones, and the indexical and iconic meanings they afford, is shared among speakers that grow up in the BAC and learn Basque very early in life and in many cases as a 'mother tongue.'

The ideological stance toward having Basque as a 'mother tongue' as an ultimate marker of authenticity and legitimacy as a speaker (Ortega et al. 2014, 2015, Urla et al. 2016) suggests that ideophones are an integral part of language socialization between parent and child. The voice of one's 'mother,' for instance, is ultimately an authentic voice "from somewhere" as it cannot be an anonymous voice. This could imply that the use of Basque ideophony is a way of stating that the ultimately authentic and local way of speaking Basque is to speak in ways associated with talk between parent and child.

This mode of acquisition contrasts, however, with models of adult and second language pedagogy that treat ideophones as a set of vocabulary terms not to be learned until students have reached the highest levels (B2 and C1) of languge study (Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 20). The pedagogical strategy to teach ideophones as vocabulary though neglects their fundamental sociality in the BAC. These forms as I've noted, are not names for things one can define referentially without whole phrases, and in many cases with accompanying gestures (Diffloth 1972, Noss 2001, Dingemanse 2013). Rather, ideophones foreground iconic and indexical relationships between linguistic form and meaning that one acquires through contextual learning and use.

Through this contextual learning speakers come to experience felt iconicities (Webster 2017a) that evoke sensorial, imagistic depictions in Basque. For instance, when I asked one of my other interlocutors how she felt about ideophones, such as *pol-pol*, 'water babbling,' and *diz-diz*, 'shining,' she talked about how when she hears these words, they suggest imagery and modes of action—they make her imagine things; She also suggests that these forms have pragmatic, socially shared meanings, as she recalls particular ideophones that are "in vogue" and "important" at that moment, "in everyone's mouths," like *pil-pil*, 'simmer, snowflake.'[23] Learning ideophones then as vocabulary does not adequately teach students how to use these forms implicated in being "authentically" Basque speakers—in being part of particular kinds of localized discourse. Rather one must learn how ideophony is indexically linked to language ideologies about Basqueness and the particular ways of speaking to which ideophones are associated. Through sharing these linkages, ideophones also simultaneously work to aesthetically resist (Webster 2014a, 2017b; Barrett 2014) both the control of the Spanish state and the

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[23] Y a mi me sugieren (.) pues, determinadas cosas. Como por ejemplo, veo *ttipi-ttapa*, veo gente andando [gesturing with her arms moving back and forth slowly to suggest the slow and steady pace of walking *ttipi-ttapa* depicts]. Veo *diz-diz* y veo y es…bueno, no es una palabra o un conjunto de palabras que no…que no he escuchado nunca asi que no me sugieren nada. Y pil pil me recuerda como que algo esta de moda en ese momento. *Pil-pilean* **dago** para mi es como…esta como en boca de todos en este momento, no? Pero es como algo* importante en este momento.
(.) - pause, * - emphasis, **bold** – Basque code switching, *italicized* - ideophones

'And to me they suggest [pause] well, determined (specific) things. Like, for example, I see *ttipi-ttapa*, I see people walking [gesturing with her arms moving back and forth slowly to suggest the slow and steady pace of walking *ttipi-ttapa* depicts]. I see *diz-diz*, and I see…and is…well, its not a word or a group of words…that I haven't heard ever so they don't suggest anything to me [she doesn't know *diz-diz*]. and *pil-pil* reminds me of something that is like in vogue in that moment. *Pil-pilean* **dago** to me is like…it's like in everyone's mouth in that moment, right? But it is like something* important in this moment.'

BAC regional government over public discourses—and standard language ideologies more broadly—through their public display of ‘playful, anti-normative’ language.

### 8.2 Branding Basqueness

Sound symbolic linguistic forms are often used to foreground expressive potentials of linguistic forms in the creation and circulation of brand names (Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala 1994; Klink 2000, 2003; Shrum et al. 2012). Ideophones, the particular kind of sound symbolism I focus on here, often play with iconicity, relating brands and logos through resemblances and indexical connections to referential and indexical meanings associated with the “brand.” As elaborated above though, it seems the brands I explore here (as in *Bor-bor*) work to simultaneously communicate very different notions of “authenticity” to their audience in many cases.

Figure 11: Branding Basqueness (a bar: *Pol-pol* ‘water babbling’, a jewelry store: *Diz-diz* ‘shine’, and an electric company: *Tximist* ‘thunderbolt’) (sources left to right: Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017, ibid, *tximist.es*)

While utilizing sound symbolic relationships between brand form and meaning is a widespread marketing strategy used in many places, in the BAC, this strategy appears to be a rather new phenomenon within the last 15 years (Ibarretxe-Atuñano, personal communication). Pictured above, *Pol-pol*, ‘water babbling,’ is the name of a bar in a

central area of the town, Bergara (Gipuzkoa). In the center above, *Diz-Diz*, 'shining,' is a jewelry store in Bilbao (Bizkaia), and on the right Tximist, 'thunderbolt,' is the name of an electric company found alongside a highway outside the small town of Irura (Gipuzkoa). Ibarretxe-Atuñano (2007) and I have documented many cases where bars are named with ideophones. This seems to correspond to particular sensory correlates of the experiences one can have in these places—such as to chat with friends over a bubbly beverage (*pol-pol*), the noise of constant, light chatter (*far-far*). We have also documented ideophones used to brand other businesses such as hotels, bars and breweries, restaurants, clothing and shoe stores, toy stores, music stores, souvenir stores, supermarkets, design studios, schools and kindergartens.

In these cases, branding ideophones in public domains and various genres discussed above may serve to index a particular future public[24] of Basque speakers that highlight language ideologies in circulation in Basque communities; publics in which people speak and are literate in particular kinds of Basque—namely Basque that views ideophones as an essential set of linguistic forms one should learn and use in public spaces (Webster 2017b). These ideophones are aesthetic "tools" as they are iconic of the businesses they are named for and the experiences one can have in such spaces, but their imagistic and sensory experience is dependent upon a sophisticated knowledge of Basque phonology, morphology, syntax, etc. (Dingemanse 2011, Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017). Such forms, in these kinds of localized instantiations, also work to defy standard language

[24] The use of these forms in so many public spheres may also be indicative of a sort of ideology of "funness" that works against the standard pedagogical models for teenage and adult language learners.

ideologies in the BAC that relegate ideophones and other playful language to the periphery of Basque language learning and use. Here locality is celebrated through particular linguistic forms.

Figure 12: Ideophones found in government initiatives, slogans and event titles: youth programs for natural sciences, music, photography: *zirt zart* 'slashing, crackling, shining', elderly exercise and socialization initiative: *ttapa-ttapa* 'walk with small steps', and community-wide festivals and language programs: dzanga 'dive into' and *mihian kili kili* 'to tickle your tongue [with Basque]' (sources left to right: http://zirtzart.basauri.eus, http://mugibili.euskadi.eus/foroa/viewtopic.php?f=42&t=127&start=20, and Ibarretxe-Atuñano 2017: 15)

Figure 12 makes clear that ideophones are not relegated to simply localized, and/or homemade signage (really, very few are handmade forms from my ethnographic observations); they are found in many mediums and levels of professional design in different public domains. The particular event pictured in Figure 12, *Ttapa-Ttapa* 'walk with small steps', took place in Hernani, a small town in Gipuzkoa, but similar community-wide initiatives across the BAC use this ideophone and other variants (i.e. *ttipi-ttapa* also translated as 'to walk with small steps') to brand similar initiatives encouraging senior citizens to exercise and socialize. The 2003 *Ibilaldia*, *Dzanga*, as discussed in section 6, took place in Lekeitio—a coastal town about an hour drive from

Bilbao (Bizkaia). Lekeitio is well known for its fishing ports, but the smaller town welcomes many tourists in the summer season to its beaches. A similar movement to *Ibilaldia* in Bizkaia, *Araba Euskaraz*, celebrated its 33rd year in 2013 at the *Aresketa Ikastola*, located on the outskirts of a larger town home to approximately 10,000 residents, Amurrio, branding their celebration with a phrase, *Mihian kili-kili, Euskaraz ibili* 'Tickle your tongue and live in Basque.' This phrase incorporates the ideophone *kili-kili* 'tickling,' and the phrase partakes of other poetic features, such as rhyme between the ideophone *kili-kili* and *ibili*.[25] In both of these cases, *Dzanga* and *Mihian kili-kili*, ideophones circulated in flyers, YouTube videos and other digital media, billboards, and t-shirts. These ideophones circulate then as event-related signs (Blommaert 2013: 53) and in some cases, speakers must circulate in particular spaces in order to encounter them. Finally, *ZirtZart*, the Youth Area of the Basauri Town Hall located on the outskirts of a town (Basauri) near Bilbao, offers various activities for young people. Courses, from recreational mushroom picking and other gastronomy activities, emotional intelligence, Basque cuisine and jazz and modern saxophone music, are all offered at the program—all relating to Basque cultural activities.

Using an ideophone to ethnographically brand Basque cultural activities denotes a connection between ideophones as indexical of an imagined Basqueness linked to shared ideologies of Basque identities as discussed at length in prior sections (Ferguson and

[25] The word *ibili*, typically a verb, in Basque has many meanings, depending on the context of its use and the way it is grammaticalized. It can mean 'to walk,' 'to be' (Sp. estar), 'to behave' or 'act,' 'to move,' 'to function' and other things. One can find various examples of its use as well as definitions on *Hiztegia Elhuyar*, a well-regarded multilingual Basque dictionary (https://hiztegiak.elhuyar.eus).

Sidorova 2018, Manning & Uplisashvili 2007). For instance, *perretxiko-ibilbideak*, 'mushroom picking,' is considered a very Basque cultural activity and hobby in the BAC. First, the environment in the Basque country is very humid due to its proximity to the Bay of Biscay, and second, there is a gastronomical element to this hobby (http://www.perretxikoak.com/). People come from all over the world to pick mushrooms in the BAC, and there is a practice of the Basques who live in the mountains to maintain secrecy about where to find the best mushrooms, especially during the "picking season" where certain areas are open to the public to go out looking in the hills. The use of ideophony to brand youth programs *perrotxikolari* also points to the "rurality" associated with authentic Basque identity discussed in the prior section.

Figure 13: *Perritxikoak* (sources left to right: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BQ1zxylGfk, https://www.fungipedia.org/noticias/micologia/694-lanzamiento-del-album-de-cromos-galdakao-perretxikotan.html, and http://www.argia.eus/argia-astekaria/2490/mahai-jolas-berria)

Authenticity here is conceptualized in a romanticized way, looking to an internalized past. In 1857 for instance, as the Spanish nation state unified and industrialization took root, Basque was relegated to a romanticized rural way of life,

which then led to different Basque groups coming together from the North and the South of the Basque region during "folkloric" festivals that laid the foundation for "a Basque speaking imagined community" that had not existed before (Urla 2012: 31). As Schieffelin and Doucet (1994:182) note, the language associated with "national identity, authenticity, independence, and sincerity" is typically connected to "romantic notions about rural people" (Woolard 2016, Urla et al. 2016).

As noted in prior discussion, *Ibilaldia*, 'march, journey, walk,' is an annual festival to raise funds in support of *ikastolak*, primary and/or secondary schools in Bizkaia, one of the provinces of the BAC. Every year, an *ikastola* in the province organizes the event, choosing a motto and creating a theme song and video for the festival. This year's *Ibilaldia* (https://ibilaldia.eus/) also utilizes ideophones in their motto, *Taup!*, and their theme song for the event; *Taup!* being 'the sound of a heart beating, palpitations,' alongside a photo of a heart-shaped sardine can.[26]

Figure 14: *Ibilaldia* 2018

The theme song for *Ibilaldia* 2018 calls everyone to *tipi-tapa* (ideophone), 'walk in slow, small, and steady steps' to keep learning and speaking their language so that it is not lost (Lyrics written by Sustrai Colinarena and La Basuk). The ideophony used here

[26] Santurtzi, the town where the *ikastola* organizing the province-wide event this year is located *Bihotz Gaztea Ikastola*, is known as a port town (Ibarretxe-Atuñano, personal communication).

serves as an iconic heartbeat of the Basque people (https://ibilaldia.eus/node/31). Just as with many of the examples above, this example demonstrates the ways Basque ideophones (and the Basque language more broadly) are used to establish intimacy among Basque people through shared understandings of sound and sense that iconically link to Basque culture, people, language and place. This theme is also meant to index a particular locality to its audiences; *Santurtzi*, the town where the hosting *ikastola* resides, is a historic port town in Bizkaia known for its sardines, a local product sold throughout the region.

Linguistic landscapes of the BAC that use Standard Basque in governmental signs may also work to reduce the register of cultural markers, making the Basque Country more like that of other places. This reduction of linguistic signage is especially apparent in the use of Standard Basque more broadly, but also salient through particular typographies (i.e. size, color, font), parallel bilingualism on signs and "Spanish-ized" Basque orthographic representations that incorporate Spanish graphemes, such as "c" and "ch, " as noted in a similar case of Welsh and English by Coupland (2012).

In all the examples I have shown above, notice the fonts are distinct and in some cases playful, yet many find similarity in their almost block-like lettering. As noted by Jarlehed (2015), the Basque Government is well aware of the impacts of typographic forms in the linguistic landscape. Thus, in 1990, they commissioned the design of a "new corporate identity." Their goals were explicitly stated in their corporate identity manual (see Figure 15) to be twofold: 1) to create something that would index "authentic" Basqueness and project traditional Basque culture and society, but at the same time be 2)

sustainable and authoritative in international settings through creating new fonts (Jarlehed 2015). Here discourses of Basque authenticity become recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs 1990) into a discourse of profit and commodified through the implementation of a new font with the goal to highlight "Basque uniqueness" (Jarlehed 2015) to the tourist.

Figure 15: The "Basque New" font (source: Jarlehed 2015: 189)

In 2014, the Basque government then took up a new tourism strategy to create the Basque Country as a "competitive nation brand on the international market" (Jarlehed 2015: 188). As can be seen in the logotype above, the typeface is used with the colors of the Basque flag: red, white and green as well as the Basque coat of arms, and the term *Eusko* that distinguishes this font, its regional government, and the Basque Country from Spanish affiliation and authority. These new fonts have been implemented on signs that Blommaert (2013: 53) categorizes as "permanent" signage (road signs, shop signs, permanent publicity signs, landmarks, graffiti, etc.) contributing to a metacultural display of cultural distinction (Coupland and Garrett 2010, Urban 2001). Interestingly though, ideophonic signage appears more typographically varied, using various fonts that don't

correspond to this "New Basque" font. Ideophony in signage then, while it also functions to metaculturally display Basqueness to the tourist and promote linguistic differentiation, may have another layer of metacultural display to communicate to the audiences of these signs. The fonts used in ideophonic signs typically do not conform to the "New Basque" promoted by the Basque Government, thus perhaps projecting aesthetic differentiation from the Basque regional government.

The use of ideophones to brand businesses, initiatives, and more does clearly serve as a form of linguistic differentiation between Spanish and Basque in the BAC, which requires cultural and linguistic knowledge, and serves to differentiate between languages used in BAC communities (similarly to case of K'iche' outlined by Barrett 2014). While one sees a lot of Basque signage in BAC communities, it is not uncommon to see Spanish signs surrounding Basque in BAC public spaces—particularly in bigger cities like Bilbao. Through such differentiation, the use of ideophones in public signage thus may also be thought of as an act of support of Basque revitalization. It may also be thought of as an act of resistance against standard language ideologies, which have marginalized the teaching of ideophones in institutional settings in the BAC for instance, and ever-present Spanish language dominance in the BAC despite the rise in Basque speakers since Franco's death (Webster 2009, 2010, 2017b).[27]

In the instances I explore here, as Manning (2010: 45) and others note, brands "are much like the graphic collages often used in marketing to model or discover these

[27] In further research, I will ethnographically explore speakers' motivations for choosing to brand their business with ideophones in interviews and experimental tasks alongside participant observation in local BAC communities.

unordered complexes of “unspoken emotional and symbolic associations,” of foregrounding cultural heritage and locality, through the use of ideophony. Again, the meanings that are derived from encountering ideophones in public spaces are dependent upon how an individual takes up their meanings.

As seen in the above examples, signs “point backward to their origins and forward to their uptake” (Blommaert 2013: 44). Signs also point to their present through emplacement. As noted by Lee in his foreword to Greg Urban’s book on *Metaculture*, “culture is spread through its instantiation in things” (2001: xii). In their emplacement then, ideophones are semiotically materialized within the linguistic landscape as physical, symbolic ‘things’—as metacultural forms (Urban 2001). They hold iconic and indexical meanings available for uptake by those that experience such signs, as signage patterns in the LL are essentially a metacultural display (Coupland 2012: 3-4; Urban 2001).

## 9 Conclusion

In this paper, I hope to have shown how Basque ideophones, particularly within public signage, are linguistic features that offer much more in their potential uptakes when one takes into account their expressive and imaginative potentials in addition to their referential meanings. Just as Noss (2001: 269) argued Gbaya artists, through use of ideophones in verbal and written forms, "create associations in the minds of listeners thereby expanding levels of performance from text to intertext, from the immediate artistic context to the broader context of Gbaya culture and aesthetics," so too I argue Basque ideophones evoke associations through resemblances beyond their immediate context to Basque culture and aesthetics (Dingemanse 2011).

I have worked to demonstrate the ways that sound and sense are interwoven in cultural and language specific indexical meanings that contribute to the uniquely "felt" iconicities, to use Webster's term (2014b) that link Basque identities through the shared intimacy of Basque-specific linguistic forms—here through the literacy practice of ideophonic branding in signage. I have argued that use of Basque ideophony in signage evokes a local kind of intimacy through processes of rhematization, creating an iconic relationship between sound and sense that comes to link Basque people and tourists to the language through 'qualia' mapped onto these linguistic forms (Gal 2005, 2013). An oppositional stance toward Standard Basque is enacted through this mode of iconization, as taken up by Basque speakers who are insecure about their fluency or by tourists who are in need of a branded cultural experience. That is, these ideophones publicly stage this intimate connection between sound, sense, and place by presupposing and opposing the

authoritative place of Standard Basque, which marginalizes ideophones and other non-normative modes of speaking. Furthermore, the same ideophones that index and iconicize linguistic intimacy for some (and in some cases the same) Basque natives also simultaneously do the metacultural work of displaying Basqueness—and of selling localness to the tourist.

These Basque ideophones work to interpellate a Basque public that responds to the intimacy of Basque orality and finds in it a marker of authenticity and belonging. As written forms of intimately oral language use devalued in Standard Basque then, these signs push back against the Basque standardization—and ideologies of anonymity implicated therein—in its own terms. Instead, they foreground ideologies of authenticity to exploit their "localness" as uniquely Basque sounds that are untranslatable and that one must learn through various modes of socialization and acquisition within local Basque communities.

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